

**Michigan Commission of Agriculture Meeting  
Michigan Department of Agriculture  
Day's Inn of Escanaba, Bay de Noc Room  
2603 North Lincoln Road  
Escanaba, Michigan**

**MEETING MINUTES  
August 16-17, 2001**

**PRESENT:**

Jordan B. Tatter, Chair  
Douglas E. Darling, Vice-Chair  
James Maitland, Secretary  
Nora Viau, Commissioner  
Dan Wyant

**ABSENT:**

Bill Pridgeon, Commissioner

**OTHERS PRESENT:** *(All or part of the meeting):*

Michigan Department of Agriculture Staff  
Peter Cambier, Northern Initiatives, Marquette, Michigan  
Jeff DeBacker, Cornell, Michigan  
Scott Grossenbach, General Manager of SubTerra LLC  
Diane Hanson, Cornell, Michigan  
Tonia Koppenaal, Michigan Farm Bureau  
Mark Pierpont, Controller, SubTerra LLC  
Shirley Skogman, Foster City, Michigan  
Joe Slater, President, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts

**CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Tatter called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture to order at 8:35 a.m. on Thursday, August 16, 2001. The roll was called with Director Wyant and all Commissioners, except for Commissioner Bill Pridgeon, present. Commissioner Pridgeon's absence was due to a death in his family.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MAITLAND MOVED TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 16-17, 2001 MEETING AGENDA AS PRESENTED. SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**APPROVAL OF COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE JULY 10, 2001 MEETING MINUTES**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MAITLAND MOVED TO APPROVE THE JULY 10, 2001 MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. SECONDED.**

MOTION TO AMEND: CHAIR TATTER MOVED TO AMEND THE MINUTES AS FOLLOWS:

Page 8, Paragraph Heading, corrected to read Staff Sgt. Devin Hahn of the Michigan National Guard.

SECONDED. MOTION TO APPROVE THE AMENDED MINUTES CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Commission of Agriculture is scheduled for September 12, 2001, at the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Ottawa State Office Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Pridgeon Conference Room, 611 West Ottawa Street, Lansing, Michigan.

#### APPROVAL OF COMMISSIONERS' PER DIEM AND/OR TRAVEL

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MAITLAND MOVED TO APPROVE COMMISSIONERS TATTER'S AND DARLING'S PER DIEM AND TRAVEL AS FOLLOWS:

COMMISSIONER DARLING: JULY 13, 2001, MDA PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS 50<sup>TH</sup> FARM SIGNING CEREMONY, CLIMAX, MICHIGAN, AND AUGUST 8, 2001, CHINA TRADE FORUM, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN.

COMMISSIONER TATTER: AUGUST 7, 2001, ANNUAL CERTIFIED CROP ADVISOR UPDATE SESSION, ITHACA, MICHIGAN, AND AUGUST 21-24, 2001, MICHIGAN HUNT CLUB VISITS IN NORTHEAST MICHIGAN (DEER MANAGEMENT UNIT 452.)

SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### APPROVAL OF DIRECTOR'S OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

MOTION: COMMISSIONER DARLING MOVED TO APPROVE DIRECTOR WYANT'S TRAVEL ON SEPTEMBER 21-26, 2001, TO ATTEND THE NASDA ANNUAL MEETING IN BURLINGTON, VERMONT. SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner James Maitland reported that dry weather continues in Northwest Michigan causing a loss in crop production. However, the cherry crop will be large this year, as the dry conditions have not been a factor for that crop.

**Commissioner Douglas Darling** reported that crops are dry in Southeast Michigan, the worst in many years. Corn pollination is fair and stands are sporadic. It is questionable whether there will be a soybean crop this year due to the dry conditions, soybean aphids and spider mites. Farmers have been using insecticides on soybean crops to fight against the insect problem.

Commissioner Darling participated in a conference call with the former president of the American Farm Bureau Federation and Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman to discuss trade promotion issues. He also attended the Farm Bill session held in Ann Arbor that was hosted by the Michigan Farm Bureau. The attendance was very good and the session offered an opportunity to hear many views. Commissioner Darling also participated in the MDA Purchase of Development Rights 50<sup>th</sup> Farm Signing Ceremony held at the Leach Farm in Climax. He attended a China World Trade Organization Conference held at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids that was hosted by the Michigan Agriculture Export Authority. Commissioner Darling reminded the Commission that the next Farmland Preservation Tour is scheduled for September 6-10, 2001.

**Commissioner Nora Viau** thanked Commissioners and staff for attending the dinner at her home last night. She reported that it has been very dry in the Upper Peninsula and the pastures have stopped growing. Many animal producers are feeding winter hay and home gardens are doing poorly. Since the last meeting, Commissioner Viau attended the Upper Peninsula Hereford Breeders' Annual Field Day where about 400 people took part in the event. On July 30, 2001, she attended the Michigan Farm Bureau Farm Bill Session held in Escanaba. Upper Peninsula producers representing the many commodities grown in the Upper Peninsula attended. She also attended the Menominee County Farm Bureau pancake breakfast held on August 11, 2001, at the Brock Farm in Daggett, Michigan. A new dairy barn and a double-twenty milking system were showcased. The Brock family will be milking 420 head of Holsteins by Christmas, with future expansion on the horizon. Commissioner Viau said there was a large turnout and about 1,200 people enjoyed the breakfast. The Upper Peninsula State Fair signals the last of summer, with students and parents gearing up for the new school year. One of the fair's most popular features is the Michigan Farm Bureau/Blue Cross Blue Shield Miracle of Life tent.

**Chair Jordan Tatter** reported that July in Southwest Michigan continued the warming trend of late June. Late July and early August were hot, but last week's temperatures were ideal. Moisture, while short of normal, is augmented by irrigation on high value crops and so growing conditions during the last month were on the plus side of good. The Tart Cherry crop in the area picked out 10 percent above the estimate, and 50 percent more than last year. Apple trees infected with the fire blight late last year have died; however, new infections are scattered and considerably less than a year ago.

Since the last Commission meeting, Chair Tatter's activities included:

- MDA's summer picnic in East Lansing.
- The Gene Thompson Memorial MDA Golf Outing fund-raiser.
- A Community Leaders' Luncheon, sponsored by the Council for a World-Class Community, and chaired by David Whitwam, chair and Chief Executive Officer of Whirlpool Corporation. This effort is aimed at revitalization of the Benton Harbor area. Tony Brown of television, print and education fame was the speaker.

- The International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses summer committee meetings held in Washington DC.
- A Farm Bill Forum held in Kalamazoo, Michigan, sponsored by the Michigan Farm Bureau. Director Wyant was the moderator.
- The Annual Certified Crop Advisor Update Session held at the Chaffin Farm in Ithaca where Commissioner Tatter represented Director Wyant as the noon speaker. Chair Tatter received a copy of the publication, "Michigan Agri Fax," produced by the Michigan Agri-Business Association and recommended that all Commissioners receive a copy of the publication.
- The Michigan Ag Experiment Station, MSU Extension and Natural Resources Conservation Service Congressional Legislative Assistants Educational Tour in Southwest Michigan.

He also will be traveling next week with Keith Charters, chair of the Natural Resources Commission, to visit various hunt clubs located in Northeast Michigan (Deer Management Unit 452.) The meetings will offer an opportunity to discuss the bovine tuberculosis situation in that area.

On behalf of the Commission and MDA staff, Chair Tatter expressed appreciation to Commissioner Nora Viau and husband, Vernon, for their hospitality in hosting a dinner at their farm last night. The event provided an informal opportunity to meet with area farmers and livestock producers.

**WELCOMING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS: Barb Hensinger, Director of the Fairs, Exhibitions and Racing Division and Grant Larsen, Manager of the Upper Peninsula State Fair**

**Barb Hensinger, Director of the Fairs, Exhibitions and Racing Division**, welcomed the Commission to the Upper Peninsula State Fair. Attendance has been up and today is Ladies Day. State Attorney General Jennifer Granholm and Lt. Governor Dick Posthumus will be attending the fair today, and Governor Engler will attend the Senior Citizens' Day Luncheon on Friday.

**Grant Larsen, Manager of the Upper Peninsula State Fair**, welcomed the Commission on behalf of the Upper Peninsula State Fair Board to the fair. He introduced Board members Joanne Steffl, John Kronemeyer, Dick Breyer, and Steve Palossari. Mr. Larsen said many improvements have been made and continue to be made at the fairgrounds.

**PRESENTATION TO FORMER COMMISSIONER SHIRLEY SKOGMAN**

On behalf of the Commission of Agriculture and the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Chair Tatter presented a plaque to former Commissioner Shirley Skogman in appreciation of her dedication and service to the State of Michigan while serving on the Michigan Commission of Agriculture.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Dan Wyant**

Director Wyant discussed the following:

**Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory (AHDL):** A construction celebration at the site of the new Michigan Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory will be held on September 12, 2001, at Michigan State University. Commissioners are invited to attend. Speakers include Governor Engler, MSU President Peter McPherson, Michigan Farm Bureau President Wayne Wood, and Director Wyant.

**Drought:** Tours will be held in the Upper and Lower peninsulas to survey firsthand the dry and potentially devastating crop conditions facing Michigan. The first tour will be held later today in the Upper Peninsula, and the second will be held on August 27 in various Lower Peninsula counties. The downstate tour will include Ingham, Oceana, Monroe and Saginaw counties. Dave Conklin, Director of the Farm Service Agency, Michigan Farm Bureau President Wayne Wood, and Acting MSU Extension Director Margaret Bethel will be invited to participate in the tour, as well as state and federal legislators.

**Confined Animal Feeding Operations/Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program:** MDA's Environmental Stewardship Division Director Vicki Pontz-Teachout and Michigan Farm Bureau President Wayne Wood will be meeting with Environmental Protection Agency officials in Washington DC to discuss Confined Animal Feeding Operations.

**Farm Winery Licensing:** Discussions continue with Michigan's grape and wine industry about farm winery licensing and local ordinances.

**Emergency Farm Bill:** An Emergency Farm Assistance Bill passed Congress and was signed by the President in the amount of \$5.5 billion. There is a provision in the bill for monies to be allocated to the states, based on each state's specialty crop value. Michigan will receive over \$3 million by October 1, 2001.

**Dale Sherwin, Director of Agriculture Policy,** reviewed the legislation and explained that Michigan would receive \$3,250,000. A committee has been formed to discuss ways the funds could be distributed to commodity groups. Language in the legislation defines "*specialty crop*" as any agriculture crop except wheat, feed grains, oil seeds, cotton, rice, peanuts, and tobacco.

Director Wyant added that MDA would work with the industry and commodity organizations in developing a grant program. Once the plan has been developed, it will be shared with the Commission and the Governor.

**Organic Industry:** A meeting was held with the chair of the Michigan Organic Advisory Committee to discuss concerns about Michigan's organic food program. The Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division will oversee certification and regulatory issues, and Christine Lietzau of the Agriculture Development Office, will be the department's representative on the advisory committee. The Organic Advisory Committee would like to make a presentation at a future Commission meeting.

**Michigan Farmland Preservation Board:** The Michigan Farmland Preservation Board will hold its first meeting next week to develop an agenda for the coming year.

**Michigan Blueberry Growers Association:** A meeting will be held with the Michigan Blueberry Growers Association to discuss third party certification.

**Welch's Corporation:** The Welch's Corporation has requested a meeting to discuss the juice grape crop loss in Michigan.

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Chair Tatter referred to a July 24, 2001 letter received from Barbara J. Brundige of Three Rivers, Michigan. Ms. Brundige is concerned about aerial pesticide application in St. Joseph County. Chair Tatter invited Ms. Brundige to attend an upcoming Commission meeting to discuss the issue.

#### **LEGISLATIVE REPORT: Brad Deacon, Legislative Liaison**

Brad Deacon, Legislative Liaison, distributed and reviewed the August 2001 Legislative Report.

Chair Tatter referred to the preceding evening's discussion with U.P. area livestock producers about bovine tuberculosis testing. Producers are concerned about the December 31, 2003 deadline date and the delay it may cause in the movement of animals into Wisconsin. He asked if it is necessary to revise the Animal Industry Act to change the deadline to an earlier date, or could the Director accelerate the testing deadline and complete the work considerably before the deadline.

**Dr. Larry Granger, Manager of the Animal Industry's Division TB Unit,** said that the testing schedule is not the only problem. The problem is locating all of those animals that need to be tested. Testing of the dairy herds was much easier because most farms have private veterinarians on site more often than beef herds and dairy herds are regulated by the state. He explained that the 2003 deadline is not the only issue. If producers are moving their animals, then most of the testing requirements are tied to movement restrictions. This is ongoing and most producers that raise feeder calves move those animals. Producers can move feeder calves simply by testing those calves. Some producers have elected to do that in lieu of a whole herd test of the adult animals. There are a lot of changes that need to be considered if we are going to further amend the Animal Industry Act. He added that one way to approach USDA is to develop a methodology that outlines Michigan's complete approach to the problem.

#### **REVIEW OF RIGHT TO FARM FILE: Gordon Wenk of the Environmental Stewardship Division**

**Gordon Wenk of the Environmental Stewardship Division** reviewed a Right to Farm case that MDA staff is recommending referral to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The case involves an environmental complaint filed against a beef farm operation owned by Pat and Tom Starrs, located in Genesee County. MDA staff met with the owners on numerous occasions to recommend that the owners seek

assistance from their local Conservation District, County Extension Service, or a private consultant to address the manure mismanagement problems. To date, there has not been a substantial effort to correct the environmental problems of soil erosion and manure runoff to neighboring property and Byram Lake.

Chair Tatter noted that this Right to Farm case is only the 13<sup>th</sup> referral out of approximately 1,300 cases over the past 12 years.

Commissioner Maitland asked if there was any provision in the law for the department to make the necessary corrections and then assess the costs to the owner.

Mr. Wenk said there is no such provision.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MAITLAND MOVED TO REFER THE PAT AND TOM STARRS RIGHT TO FARM CASE TO THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY FOR APPROPRIATE ENFORCEMENT ACTION. SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **UPDATE ON BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS: Dr. Nancy Frank of the Animal Industry Division**

**Dr. Nancy Frank of the Animal Industry Division** reported that no new infected herds have been found in Michigan. Currently, there are 16 infected cattle herds, and one cervid herd. Two dairy herds are still under quarantine. Testing continues in the high-risk area, and all dairy herds in that area are due to be tested by October 22, 2001. Testing also continues in Mecosta and Emmett Counties.

Dr. Frank replied to a question that was raised at last month's Commission meeting about livestock transportation across the Mackinac Bridge. She said that the Mackinac Bridge Authority has begun keeping a tally of the number of truck-and-trailer livestock haulers crossing the Mackinac Bridge. The first report on this activity should be available soon and will be shared with the Commission.

Dr. Frank also reported that staff has visited the cervid farms that needed to be tested by July 2000 as required under Public Act 466. Most of those farms have volunteered to be tested this fall.

Commissioner Maitland asked why those cervid herds had not been tested before now, and if the farms are licensed by the state.

Dr. Frank explained that MDA has recently assumed responsibility for the privately owned cervid program from the Department of Natural Resources. At the time these animals were to be tested, MDA did not have responsibility for permits or licenses.

She said that the Animal Industry Division is currently developing a Bovine Tuberculosis Strategic Plan that will provide background, features, accomplishments, and proposed enhancements to the program. Staff is also working with USDA on Michigan's zoning application. Both the plan and the application should be completed by fall and the information will be shared with the Commission. Dr. Peggy Roth of the Animal Industry

Division has returned from the United Kingdom where she has been assisting with the Foot-and-Mouth Disease eradication program. Dr. Roth will be asked to provide an update at the Commission's September meeting.

Commissioner Maitland referred to last night's meeting with Upper Peninsula producers, and asked if testing in the U.P. could be completed as soon as possible to help ease Wisconsin movement restrictions. He asked if it would be practical to put all efforts toward the U.P. testing without putting Lower Michigan at a disadvantage.

Dr. Frank replied that if Michigan continues monitoring at the Mackinac Bridge and if testing in the U.P. is completed, she does not see any reason why Wisconsin should not consider easing its movement restrictions in the future regarding U.P. livestock.

Dr. Larry Granger stated his belief that if Michigan actively engages in testing in the U.P. and can present Michigan's movement restrictions for all animals that move out of the high-risk area, then he agrees that Wisconsin may reconsider its movement restrictions. However, Dr. Granger does not believe that Michigan is currently in a position to make that case.

Director Wyant would like to consider taking a group of Michigan livestock producers to meet with Wisconsin state officials and producers. The goal would be present Michigan's strategic plan and to have one-on-one discussions to share each state's perspectives.

**DISCUSSION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS' IMPACT ON MDA PROGRAMS: Gordon Wenk of the Environmental Stewardship Division and Joe Slater, President of the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts**

**Gordon Wenk of the Environmental Stewardship Division** reported that last year's increase in funding of conservation districts aided in building the capacity of Michigan's conservation districts. Conservation districts are vital to MDA as they help to support and promote MDA programs.

**Joe Slater, President of the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts** discussed the Conservation Districts' Gateway Program. The concept of the program is to get all districts on an even base in terms of growth and resources.

**APPROVAL OF FORMULA FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS TO LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS: Gordon Wenk of the Environmental Stewardship Division**

**Gordon Wenk of the Environmental Stewardship Division** distributed and recommended Commission approval of the proposed "Conservation District Funding Formula."

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MAITLAND MOVED TO APPROVE THE FORMULA FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS TO LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AS PRESENTED. SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**



### **APPROVAL OF COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE RESOLUTIONS:**

Director Wyant presented proposed Commission of Agriculture Resolutions in recognition of two departing employees: Dr. Harry Michael Chaddock, State Veterinarian and Director of the Animal Industry Division, and Clare Allen Cargo, Nursery Inspector with the Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER VIAU MOVED TO APPROVE THE COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE RESOLUTIONS IN RECOGNITION OF DR. HARRY MICHAEL CHADDOCK AND CLARE ALLEN CARGO AS PRESENTED WITH THE COMMISSION'S SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR THEIR SERVICE AND DEDICATION. SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **HR 2149, THE TRADE PROMOTION ACT OF 2001: Commissioner Darling**

Commissioner Darling read a proposed Michigan Commission of Agriculture Resolution supporting HR 2149, The Trade Promotion Act of 2001. The resolution read as follows:

**WHEREAS, EVERY U.S. PRESIDENT OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS HAS HAD AUTHORITY TO NEGOTIATE TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH APPROVAL, BUT NOT AMENDMENTS BY CONGRESS, AND**

**WHEREAS, THIS AUTHORITY EXPIRED IN 1994, AND**

**WHEREAS, THE PASSAGE OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS DESIGNED TO REDUCE TRADE BARRIERS AND CREATE FAIRER TRADE SETS THE STAGE TO MOVE AMERICAN AGRICULTURE FORWARD IN THE WORLD MARKETPLACE, AND**

**WHEREAS, U.S. AGRICULTURE DEPENDS ON EXPORTS FOR OVER ONE-THIRD OF ALL SALES. DURING FY2000 THE UNITED STATES EXPORTED \$50 BILLION IN AGRICULTURAL GOODS, AND**

**WHEREAS, MICHIGAN IS AN IMPORTANT PRODUCER AND EXPORTER OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS, AND ONE OUT OF THREE ACRES OF MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE GOES TO EXPORT, AND**

**WHEREAS, THESE EXPORTS HELP BOOST FARM PRICES AND INCOME, WHILE SUPPORTING ABOUT 11,900 JOBS BOTH ON-THE-FARM AND OFF-THE-FARM IN FOOD PROCESSING, STORAGE, AND TRANSPORTATION.**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE THAT CONGRESS SHOULD PASS HR 2149, THE TRADE PROMOTION ACT OF 2001, WHICH CALLS FOR ADOPTION OF AGRICULTURAL NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVES TO OBTAIN COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR U.S. PRODUCERS THAT ARE SUBSTANTIALLY EQUIVALENT TO THE ACCESS AFFORDED FOREIGN COMPETITORS IN THE U.S. MARKETPLACE,**

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION BE SENT TO EACH MEMBER OF THE MICHIGAN CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION URGING QUICK PASSAGE OF HR 2149, THE TRADE PROMOTION ACT OF 2001.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER DARLING MOVED TO APPROVE THE MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE RESOLUTION SUPPORTING HR 2149, THE TRADE PROMOTION ACT OF 2001. SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Tonia Koppelaar of the Michigan Farm Bureau** said that the Farm Bureau is very concerned about crop damage caused by the drought and is looking forward to participating in the August 27 downstate tour. She said that several Farm Bill Forums have been held around the state to receive broad input. The information gathered will be invaluable on the national level. The Michigan Farm Bureau is also looking forward to being involved in land use issues and the Michigan Farmland Preservation Board.

**PRESENTATION REGARDING UPPER PENINSULA AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: Peter Cambier of Northern Initiatives of Marquette**

**Peter Cambier of Northern Initiatives** in Marquette gave a Power Point presentation about Northern Initiatives. Northern Initiatives is a community development corporation. It is a joint venture formed in 1992 between The Shorebank Corporation of Chicago and Northern Michigan University. Northern Initiatives helps people and companies to create, compete, and promote sustainability for businesses and natural resources. The loan fund will soon exceed \$6 million and will grow to over \$6.5 million in 2001. Since 1994 Northern Initiatives has provided loans to over 100 customers. There are roughly 480 manufacturers in the U.P. and Northern Initiatives reaches 160 customers. Currently, the company is working with secondary wood manufacturers in lumber utilization and wood residue issues; building partnerships between small manufacturers, university research, and national laboratories.

Two projects that Northern Initiatives is currently involved in are "Composting as a Strategy to Recycle Fish Processing Waste" and "SubTerra LLC." He explained that composting to recycle fish processing waste is a project funded by the Environmental Assistance Division of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) as part of the Clean Michigan Initiative. In addition to the partnership with MDEQ, partners also include the Michigan State University Sea Grant Extension Service and the Mackinac Straits Fish Company. Michigan harvests about 14 million pounds of fish commercially from the Great Lakes, generating 7.4 million pounds of waste. This waste can contain microcontaminants and disposal is a problem. The objectives are to demonstrate that compost made from this waste can be a valuable component in a planting mix or soil amendment and to provide information on markets, regulations, contaminant levels and composting practices to the processing industry.

SubTerra LLC is an underground growth chamber located in the White Pine Mine. SubTerra's mission is contract growing and processing services for the biopharmaceutical industry. SubTerra has a secure, disease-free growing environment and provides accelerated growth rates. Some of SubTerra's projects include tobacco, small-scale pilot

projects with SemBioSys, Health Canada, mine tailings research, and native grasses for conservation districts and the City of Escanaba. Future plans include expanding to 400,000 square feet of growing area, employing over 200 employees, and expanding value-added processing.

Commissioner Darling noted that the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture is exploring projects for growing crops during long-term space travel. This research may be of benefit to the SubTerra project.

**Scott Grossenbach, General Manager of SubTerra LLC**, explained that a portion of the mine is closed due to a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) remedial action. There is a saltwater environmental concern in the lower mine. Permission was granted to flood part of the lower mine with freshwater, with the primary goal being to eliminate salt water from being released into Lake Superior. Mr. Grossenbach said that SubTerra's presence only uses about 9 percent of the mine. They do not want to have the entire mine flooded. SubTerra's location is 675 feet underground and is requesting support from MDA to continue its project and to assist in its negotiations with MDEQ to maintain the current level of water.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Jeff DeBacker of Cornell, Michigan**, Marquette County, expressed his concern about the drought conditions in the Upper Peninsula. Mr. Cornell raises about 700-800 head of cattle and over 200 acres of potatoes. He said that approximately 80 percent of his potato crop is dead due to severe dry conditions. This has caused extreme financial difficulties. He appreciates the fact that the Commission and staff will be touring the area to see the drought's impact on the farmers in the area.

Director Wyant explained that tours of the drought areas will provide for fact-finding to request federal disaster assistance. A partnership will be joined between MDA, Michigan State University, and the Farm Services Agency. Once damage assessment has been completed, a request for a disaster designation will be requested. Director Wyant said he recognizes that, in some cases, the damage has been done and even if rain did occur, there would be no recovery. However, in the short-term MDA will be inviting state and federal legislators and the Michigan Farm Bureau to participate in the tours to view the damage firsthand. He said that the process is underway.

**Shirley Skogman, former Commissioner and resident of Foster City, Michigan**, expressed her appreciation to the Commission and the Michigan Department of Agriculture for the years she served on the Commission of Agriculture. She welcomed new Commissioners Nora Viau and Bill Pridgeon.

Ms. Skogman expressed concern that legal requirements for payment bonding do not adequately protect potato growers. She said their farm is having a hard time receiving funds this year because the law sets the amount of bond lower than the value of the potatoes she sells. She also expressed concern about the increased cost of block permits for deer. The deer damage in the Upper Peninsula continues to be a significant problem.

## **RECESS**

The meeting recessed at 12:05 p.m. on Thursday, August 16, 2001.

*The Commission participated in a luncheon with Region I and Region II Conservation Districts and toured Upper Peninsula drought disaster areas.*

*On Friday, August 17, 2001, the Commission participated in a breakfast with the Upper Peninsula State Fair Board, a Governor's Reception hosted by the Delta County Chamber of Commerce, the Senior Citizen's Day Luncheon at the U.P. State Fairgrounds, and attended a meeting between the Governor and the Growing Upper Peninsula Agriculture Association.*

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, August 17, 2001.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

*The following documentation is on file in the Commission of Agriculture office and is available upon request by contacting Vicki Burke, Michigan Commission of Agriculture, P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, Michigan 48909, 517-373-1085.*

Attachment A	Commission of Agriculture July 10, 2001 Meeting Minutes
Attachment B	Director's Report – August 2001
Attachment C	Legislative Report – August 2001
Attachment D	Correspondence to Pat and Tom Starrs, Linden, Michigan
Attachment E	Formula for the Distribution of Grants to Local Conservation Districts
Attachment F	Commission of Agriculture Resolution: Dr. Harry Michael Chaddock
Attachment G	Commission of Agriculture Resolution: Clare Allen Cargo
Attachment H	Commission of Agriculture Resolution: HR 2149, The Trade Promotion Act of 2001